

Public Policy Committee
Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Minutes of the Meeting
May 5, 2010

Attendees: Bob Tiller, Jack Sprague, Elaine Binder, Alicia Bazan-Jimenez, Leslie Marks, Mona Negm, Mike Greenhut, Nguyen Minh Chau, John Honig

1. State legislature

Jack Sprague reported that the 2010 state legislative session is over. Legislative committees will meet during the remainder of the year for hearings, but no votes will be taken. Not many meetings will occur this summer, since it is an election year.

There was discussion about the Communities for a Lifetime legislation, the aims of the Empowerment Commission, and aging-in-place. Some think that the topic is too broad, and that there are circumstances where aging-in-place may not be a good solution. There was also a question about why it is necessary to have a law for people to help each other or even certification (Florida style). There was agreement that the proposed summer study on the topic should cover these concerns, and, hopefully, come up with some implementable recommendations.

Jack Sprague suggested that it would be educational for the whole committee to take a trip to Annapolis in the summer or fall, so he could show us around and give us a feel for what goes on in the legislature. There was a general agreement that a visit in September or October would be useful.

Jack also volunteered to give a tutorial in late Fall about how to access information related to legislative matters.

2. County budget and County Council

Members of the Commission on Aging met with all nine members of the County Council (one at a time) in April to discuss budget priorities. The committee reviewed those meetings and learnings from them. Every councilmember mentioned the difficult budget situation within which we are operating, saying there is little possibility of restoring cuts made by the County Executive.

Councilmember Marc Elrich and others are interested in reorganizing County government, but there are different proposals on this subject. Councilmember Mike Knapp and others are also interested in combining community centers and senior centers into multi-utility facilities, but the full costs (or unintended consequences) of such efforts are not always recognized.

Elaine Binder said that we did our budget advocacy this year as we had always done in the past, but she has concerns about it. Many of us don't really understand the process. The departments

prepare a budget, often with cuts, which becomes the Executive's budget. Then the Council committees hold hearings at which department staffs support the budget that they prepared. The Commission must find a better way to pick priorities and advocate them at the right time to the right people. Elaine will lead an effort this summer to consider how to be more effective in dealing with budget matters before the Council.

There was discussion about Council President Nancy Floreen's assertion that she does "not believe in aging-in-place," and that the Commission should revisit its basic assumptions. Elaine visited her recently and had further discussion about this. Floreen wants to open up multi-family housing by changing the zoning restrictions. This could become part of the summer study. Elaine has invited Floreen to the September meeting of the Commission.

3. Updates on old business

a. With regard to MLARP funding for medical education, Jack is continuing to follow this effort until the federal government agrees to release the funding.

b. Ted Meyerson of USM has been invited to meet with the Executive Committee on June 17 regarding issues about possible Commission membership in USM.

c. Bob Tiller reported that the federal Elder Justice Act, which provides a permanent federal funding stream for adult protective services (and which this committee discussed several times last year), was included in the recently-enacted health care reform.

d. Chau raised the topic of reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. She brought two articles related to this, which she asked Bob to distribute electronically. Bob mentioned that OAA is normally renewed every 5 years, and the last one was in 2006. In another 9-12 months he expects hearings on OAA reauthorization. The Act is very broad, so we should select narrower topics such as senior transportation or housing if we wish to advocate for something. Older Americans Act reauthorization might be a topic for this committee in Fall. Elaine mentioned the possibility of including this as a summer study if Chau would be willing to prepare a proposal.

4. Summer study proposals from this committee

Jack passed around his proposal for a summer study on "Communities for a Lifetime," which will be presented to the Commission in the summer study selection process.

John Honig said that he decided not to go forward with his idea for summer study on legislation not enacted, because he believes Jack's proposal is more valuable at this time.

Next meeting --- The Public Policy Committee will meet on **Thursday, June 10** (which gets us back on the usual second-Thursday-of-the-month schedule).